

The past is never dead. It's not even past

NOT EVEN PAST



Films on Migration, Exile, and Forced Displacement

Like 5

Tweet



Almost as soon as people became human they went on the move and forced others to move to serve their own ends. Possibly even earlier, people began to tell stories.

In the twentieth century, people all over the world told their stories about leaving home and going to live among strangers on film.

How can these stories help us understand the movement of people in the past and in the present? What historical and geographical forces shape the experience of migration and forced migration? Can movies help us understand migration as an essentially human instinct and experience? How do those experiences differ for men and women? What roles do culture and religion play in the powerful economic and political forces that usually propel migration? Can films create empathy? Can they influence policy? What do these particular stories tell us about the countries we live in and all the countries we may journey to?



For the coming academic year, 2017-18, the annual theme of Institute for Historical Studies at UT Austin is **"Migration, Exile, and Displacement."** The IHS will have regular presentations given by our faculty, graduate students, and visiting researchers, that are open to the public.

We will be sponsoring a film series — ON THE MOVE: FILMS ABOUT MIGRATION, EXILE, AND DISPLACEMENT — with feature films from all over the world about Migration, Exile and Displacement every other Tuesday evening starting in September (stay tuned for details).

Here on Not Even Past, we are collecting titles of films from every period and from every region of the world to provide a resource for anyone curious about these films.

YOU CAN HELP!

ADD TITLES to our list. This list was compiled by a specialist in Russian film history and a specialist in Asian American migration history, with a little help from our friends. That means there are big holes in our compendium. We might have even made some mistakes. You can help us make this list as inclusive as possible. Use the CONTACT button below to send us a message with titles of feature (fictional) films about migration, exile, and displacement.

WRITE A REVIEW. We at NEP would like to post your reviews. If you are interested in reviewing films about migration and forced migration, use the CONTACT button to pitch an idea for a review.

THE LIST: WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Conceivably, almost any film could be about migrants, since the distribution of people in the world has changed continually since humans began walking. So we had to make some hard decisions about what to include.

Primarily, we include feature (fictional) films that focus on people leaving home and moving between, arriving, or living in a different place or country, whether forced or voluntary or something in between.

We do not include every film about people living somewhere other than their or their families' place of origin, because that would include far too many films.

We include films about coerced displacement, although many people consider the forcible movement of people from one place to another place where they will continue to be coerced or enslaved to be fundamentally different from the movement of people who are able to choose. We sympathize with this view but consider it worthwhile to encourage people to think about the differences and the similarities between the experiences of people captured and sold into slavery or prostitution and those who choose to move.

We do not include documentary films, TV series, TV episodes. We hope to make separate lists of these at a later time.

We do not include films that seem to be nothing more than vehicles for exhibiting violence as entertainment. There is often violence in films about migration and forced migration because there is violence in migrants' lives, but we have excluded films that we see as reveling in violence for its own sake.

We tried to add brief descriptions to identify genre, settings, and people involved.

***Films available on Kanopy** (accessible with UT EID and subscriptions at other libraries) are marked with an asterisk. More of the films on the list are available on Kanopy — please let us know if you find them there.

We are eager to hear from you: what films have we left out? Which films touched you or inspired or angered you?

And we are eager to see you in September at our film series, ON THE MOVE: FILMS OF MIGRATION, EXILE, AND DISPLACEMENT.

~ Madeline Hsu and Joan Neuberger

updated September 2, 2017



2010s

Morgen (2010, Marian Crisan) A security guard at a supermarket tries to help a Turk illegally in a Romanian bordertown

*Illegal (2010, Olivier Masset-Depasse), an undocumented Russian woman is arrested and separated from her son

A Better Life (2011, Chris Weitz) A gardener in East L.A. tries to keep gangs and immigration agents away from his son and give him a better life than he had.

*Le Havre (2011, Aki Kaurismäki), a shoeshiner who tries to save an immigrant child in the French port city.



Free Men (2011, Ismaël Ferroukhi), the largely untold story about the role that Algerian and other North African Muslims in Paris played in the French resistance and as rescuers of Jews during the German occupation in WWII

*Monsieur Lazhar (2012, Philippe Falardeau) Algerian teacher in Montreal

Home Again (2012, Sudz Sutherland) 3 men deported to Jamaica after living most of their lives in Canada, the US, and UK

*Shun Li and the Poet (2012, Andrea Segre) young woman from China befriends East European man working in a seaside village in Italy arousing local suspicion

When I Saw You (2012, Annemarie Jacir), Palestinian boy in Jordan he meets a group of charismatic freedom fighters

*The Pirogue (2012, Moussa Touré) A reluctant fisherman, a group of desperate people, a small boat crossing to Spain from Senegal.

*The Citizen (2012, Sam Kadi) Ibrahim Jarrah wins the U.S Green Card Lottery and lands in New York City the day before 9/11, which shapes the struggles he faces on his journey in the US.

The Immigrant (2013, James Gray) Polish women 1920s NY, one stuck at Ellis Island, the other tricked into stripping and prostitution.

Zinda Bhaag/Run for Your Life (2013, Meenu Gaur & Farjad Nabi) set in Pakistan, three young men trying to emigrate

The Golden Dream (2013, Diego Quemada-Díez) (original happier version: 1987) four teenagers on a harrowing journey through Mexico to the US.

Guten Tag, Ramon (2013, Jorge Ramírez Suárez) After multiple attempts to enter the US, Ramon goes to Germany

Brooklyn (2015, John Crowley), Irish girl in NY torn between new life and old, set in early 1950s

Desierto (2015, Jonás Cuarón) a group of men try to make it across the Mexico-US border and run into a border patrolman.

Out of My Hand (2015, Takeishi Fukunaga) a Liberian rubber plantation worker leaves and becomes a cab driver in NYC.

The Citizen (2016, Roland Vranick) the bureaucratic hurdles an African immigrant has to overcome to achieve citizenship in Hungary; also interracial/cross-cultural romance

Jupiter's Moon (2017, Kornél Mundruczó) a supernatural take on Europe's current refugee crisis.



2000s

Dancer in the Dark (2000, Lars von Trier) Czech factory worker (Bjork) going blind in Washington

Catfish in Black Bean Sauce (2000, Chi Muoi Lo) comedy-drama about Vietnamese siblings adopted by African American parents

Last Resort, (2000, Paweł Pawlikowski) Russian mother and son asylum seekers in UK.

Sunday God Willing (2001, Yamina Benguigui) Algerians in France,



*The Other World (2001, Merzak Allouache) Young second-generation Algerians in Paris go to Algeria

*Borders (2002, Mostefa Djadjam), 7 people en route from Senegal to Morocco hoping to get to Spain

In America (2002 Jim Sheridan), grieving Irish family moves to NY, father aspiring actor and children befriend African immigrant w HIV

Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002, Philip Noyce) three Australian aboriginal girls, who had been taken from their families in 1931 to be trained as domestic servants, make a daring escape and embark on an epic 1,500 mile journey to get back home.

Lilya 4-Ever (Lukas Moodysson, 2002), Mom leaves daughter to go US from Soviet Union, daughter is tricked into emigrating to Sweden where she is raped and sex-trafficked.

Baran (2002, Majid Majidi) lyrical love story among Afghani refugees working in Iran

Dirty, Pretty Things (2003 Stephen Frears) Undocumented migrants in London vulnerable to all kinds of unscrupulous people

Nowhere in Africa (2003, Caroline Link) German family flees Nazis to Kenya

In This World (Michael Winterbottom, 2002) perilous journey to W Europe from refugee camp in Pakistan

Head On (2004, Fatih Akin) Turkish migrants in Germany.

Yasmin (2004, Kenneth Gleenan) a young "westernized" Pakistani woman in England in tense arranged marriage whose life changes after 9/11 when her husband is arrested and she is abused at work.

Ae Fond Kiss (2004, Ken Loach) complications arise when Scottish Pakistani Muslim and Catholic immigrant from Ireland fall in love.

Maria, Full of Grace (2004, Joshua Marston) a desperate young woman accepts a job as a drug mule.

Take Out (2004, Sean Baker and Shih-Ching Tsou), one day in the life of an undocumented Chinese immigrant trying to pay off debt he owes for getting smuggled into the country

Live and Become (2005, Radu Mihaileanu) A Christian boy escapes to Israel from famine-stricken Ethiopia by pretending to be Jewish

Man Push Cart (2005, Ramin Bahrani), a Pakistani food-truck operator trying to make things better

Children of Men (2006, Alfonso Cuarón), Set in 2027, a police state awash with refugees from even worse places, global infertility, one disillusioned bureaucrat, and one pregnant woman.

Ghosts (2006, Nick Broomfield), an unemployed Chinese woman enters Europe illegally with help of gang entraps and exploits her

Colossal Youth (2006, Pedro Costas) an elderly immigrant from Cape Verde living in a low-cost housing complex in Lisbon (to which he has been relocated when the Portugese government demolished his slum).

The Namesake (2006, Mira Nair), a family from Calcutta moves to New York and tries to balance old and new, preservation and adaptation.

Chop Shop (2007, Ramin Bahrani), 12-year-old Latino street orphan in Queens (NY) hustling to make things better



Persepolis (2007, Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud) animated biographical film about resilient, young Iranian girl's constricted life at home in Iran and differently constricted life in exile in Europe

The Visitor (2007 Tom McCarthy with) Syrian drummer, & Senegalese girlfriend found squatting in long empty apartment of a tired old white man who finds them and is rejuvenated
It's a Free World (2007, Ken Loach) friends get fired, find jobs for immigrants,

The Secret of the Grain (2007, Abdellatif Kechiche), French-Tunisian family, condescending French bureaucrats, opening a restaurant, lots of food

Padre Nuestro (2007, Christopher Zalla), a boy goes to NY to find his wealthy father but along the way another man steals his identity and convinces father that he is the son.

Under the Same Moon (2007, Patricia Riggen) a boy makes a long journey from Mexico to his mother in LA

Import/Export (2007, Ulrich Seidl)

Brick Lane (2007, Sarah Gavron) young Bangladeshi woman arrives in 1980s London, leaving her beloved sister behind (novel by Monica Ali)

Good-bye Solo (2008 Ramin Bahrani,) Senegalese cab driver, working to make things better in Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Lorna's Silence, (2008, Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne), Albanians in Belgium,

Frozen River (2008, Courtney Hunt) two working-class women smuggle illegal immigrants from Canada to the US in order to make ends meet.

For a Moment, Freedom (2008, Arash T. Riahi) Weary Middle Eastern refugees who have made their way to Turkey to apply for European visas.

Gran Torino (2008, Clint Eastwood) grumpy old white man redeemed by meeting Hmong neighbors

Sleep Dealer (2008, Alex Rivera) set in a dystopian militarized world with closed borders, virtual labor and a global digital network, three strangers risk their lives to connect with each other and break the barriers of technology.

Edge of Heaven (2008, Fatih Akin)

Eden is West (Costa-Gravas, 2009) on a boat en route to Paris

Welcome (Philippe Loiret, 2009 on Kanopy) 17 yo Kurd in Europe, France

Sin Nombre (2009, Cary Fukunaga), rough journey from Honduras to Mexico to the US, a girl and a gangster,

Amreeka (2009, Cherien Dabis), a Palestinian Christian immigrant single mother and her teenage son in small town Indiana

Crossing Over (2009, Wayne Kramer) (with Harrison Ford, Ashley Judd, Ray Liotta) Multi-character story about immigration in LA.

Between Us/Entre Nos (2009, Paola Mendoza, Gloria La Morte) A Colombian emigrant and her two children struggle to survive after her husband abandons them in New York.

Desert Flower (2009, Sherry Hormann) based on the life of a Somali supermodel who was circumcised at age 3, sold into marriage at 13, escapes to London and later becomes a UN spokesperson at female genital mutilation.





1990s

Avalon (1990, Barry Levinson) A Jewish family feuds and supports each other and adapts to live in Baltimore in 1940s-50s.

Journey of Hope (1990, Xavier Koller), Difficult journey of Turks trying to emigrate to Switzerland

Daughters of the Dust (1991, Julie Dash) In 1902, the Gullah people living on an island off the coast of S. Carolina debate the wisdom of moving to the mainland

Mississippi Masala (1991, Mira Nair) Romance between African American and Indian American in Mississippi

A Thousand Pieces of Gold (1991, Nancy Kelly), drama about a Chinese woman fending for herself as she is sold and resold in the US West, set in 1880s.

The Suspended Step of the Stork (1991, Theo Angelopoulos) a poetic treatment of the border as a state of mind and condition for living; set on the Greek-Albanian border

Far and Away (1992, Ron Howard), Action-drama about Irish immigrants in the 1890s US

The Joy Luck Club (1993, Wayne Wang) Four older Chinese women in San Francisco reveal their pasts and the cultural clashes that shaped their lives

Sankofa (1993, Haile Gerima), while visiting Ghana for work, a modern-day fashion model is transported to the past to experience the traumas of American chattel slavery.

Window to Paris (1993, Yuri Mamin) Russians dreaming about escape discover portal to Paris

Cone-heads (1993, Steve Barron), extraterrestrials try to assimilate in New Jersey

Lamerica (Gianni Amelio, 1994) Albanians and Italians dreaming of escape from Albania

*Names Live Nowhere (1994, Dominique Loreau), Senegalese storyteller en route to Belgium tells stories about African immigrants in Belgium

Picture Bride (1995, Kayo Hatta) Set in 1918, the hard life of a urban Japanese woman sold to an older Japanese field worker in Hawaii.

La Promesse (Dardenne brothers, 1996) Unscrupulous Belgian trafficking refugees makes his 15 year old son figure out how to do the right thing.

Comrades: Almost a Love Story (1996, Peter Ho-Sun Chan with Maggie Cheung, Leon Lai) 1980s migration from China to Hong Kong, adaptation, then remigration to the US

Amistad (1997, Stephen Spielberg) The 1839 revolt of Mende captives on Spanish owned ship causes controversy in US when the ship is captured. A freed slave recruits lawyer and the courts decide whether the Mende are slaves or legally free.

Happy Together (1997, Wong Kar-Wai) Two men in an intense but volatile relationship leave Hong Kong for Argentina where things don't get better.

Eternity and a Day (1998, Theo Angelopoulos) Dying famous writer helps Albanian boy find his way home.

Beautiful People (1999, Jasmin Dizdar) satirical comedy set in London about refugees from war in former Yugoslavia.





1980s

The Border (1982, Tony Richardson), corrupt border agent cleans up his act when an impoverished woman's baby is put up for sale on the black market.

El Norte (1983 Gregory Nava), Guatemalans make their way through harrowing journey to the US),

Moscow on the Hudson (Paul Mazursky, 1984). Robin Williams as circus performer & asylum seeker in NY

Stranger Than Paradise, (1985 Jim Jarmusch), Hungarians across generations in US

Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart (1985, Wayne Wang) An aging Chinese immigrant widow faces the New Year thinking of all of the things she wants to do before she dies, including seeing her daughter married and visiting China one last time to pay her respects

An American Tail (1986, Don Bluth) animated film about mice who emigrate from Russia to the US, one gets lost, and has adventures with other immigrant mice

Dragon Food (1987, Jan Shütte) Disparate migrants live together in a seedy hotel in Hamburg, hatching plans and trying to help each other.

China Girl (1987, Abel Ferrara) ill-fated love between an Italian boy and a Chinese girl in NY, 1980s, think Romeo and Julie or West Side Story

Living on Tokyo Time (1987, Stephen Okazaki) Romantic comedy revolving around Japanese American rock musician Ken and his marriage of convenience to Kyoko, a young immigré from Japan who speaks limited English.

Time of the Gypsies (1988, Emir Kusturica),

Pelle the Conqueror (1988, Bille August) Swedish immigrants in 1850s Denmark

Blood Red (1989, Peter Masterson) Sicilian winemakers feud with RR robber baron in 1890s California

Haitian Corner (1988, Raoul Peck) an exile from the Duvalier regime in NY who thinks he recognizes one of his torturers in a Haitian bookstore.

Eat a Bowl of Tea (1989, Wayne Wang) generational change among NY Chinese, after WWII

Wait Until Spring, Bandini (1989, Dominique Deruddere) Italian workers family drama in 1920s Colorado



1970s

The Emigrants (1971, Jan Troell with Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann) Swedes suffer and triumph in Midwest US



Touki bouki (1973, Djibril Diop Mambéty) Mory, an African cowherd and Anta, a student, dream of going to Paris but when they board the boat in the Port of Dakar, Mory is unable to leave.

*Ali, Fear Eats the Soul (1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder) an unlikely relationship between an elderly woman and a Moroccan migrant worker in post-war Germany.

Sandakan 8 (1974, Kei Kumai) the life story of a young Japanese girl sold into indentured servitude and prostitution in Malaysia in the 1920

Bread and Chocolate (Franco Brusati, 1974) Italian guest workers in Switzerland

Garm Hava (1974, M.S. Sathyu) A Muslim businessman and his family struggle in post-Partition India

Hester Street (1975, Joan Micklin Silver), Jewish immigrants in NY's Lower East Side 1890s

Alambrista! (1977, Robert. M. Young), After the birth of his first child, Roberto, a young Mexican man slips across the border into the United States. Seeking work to support his family back home, he finds that working hard is not enough.

El Super (1979, Leon Ichaso, Orlando Jiménez Leal), exiles from Cuba in NY, don't understand 17 yo daughter who smokes pot and likes disco.



1950s-60s

A Lady Without a Passport (1950, Henry Hathaway) a beautiful concentration-camp refugee living in Cuba is entrapped by an undercover immigration agent while waiting for permission to enter the US

Moi, Un Noir (1958, Jean Rouch) controversial, ethno-fictional film about Nigerian men seeking work in Ivory Coast.

Flower Drum Song (1961, Henry King) Marriage and arranged marriage among Chinese immigrants in NY, based on Rogers and Hammerstein musical.

A View from the Bridge (1962, Sidney Lumet) based on the play by Arthur Miller about Italians Americans and illegal Italian immigrants in NY in the 1950s

America America (1963, Elia Kazan) his ancestors' harrowing journey from Anatolia

Barren Lives (1963, Nelson Pereira dos Santos) a poor family move from place to place in northeast Brazil searching for food and work, without much success.

Sallah Shabati (1964, Ephraim Kishon), a comedy about an Iraqi Jew who migrates to Israel and tries various schemes to make a life for himself there.

Black Girl (Ousmane Sembène, 1966,) influential portrait of Senagalese girl working as domestic in France

Oh, Sun (Soleil Ô) (1967, Med Hondo), Mauritanian man seeks work in Paris





1930s-1940s

I Cover the Waterfront (1933, James Cruze) romance between a reporter and the daughter of a smuggler bringing Chinese migrants to the US

A Night at the Opera (1935, Sam Wood) Marx Bros classic revolves around fate of illegal immigrants

The Wedding Night (1935, King Vidor) struggling novelist gets involved with Polish woman and her family in Connecticut

Pepe Le Moko (1937, Julien Duvivier) A wanted French gangster (Jean Gabin) stuck in the Casbah in Algiers

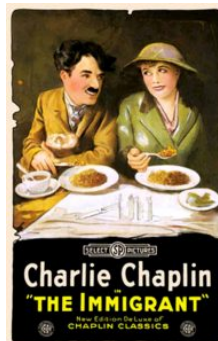
Where is My Child (1937, Henry Lynn) destitute Russian-Jewish mother gives up son and is committed to insane asylum by his adoptive parents when she tries to get him back, they're reunited 20 years later.

Grapes of Wrath (1940, John Ford), based on Steinbeck novel, Oklahoma family of migrant farmers travels to California in search of work

So Ends Our Night (1941, John Cromwell), Jewish and other refugees in Europe trying to stay one step ahead of the Nazis just as the war is starting.

Arch of Triumph (1948, Lewis Milestone), Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman fall in and out of love, trying to keep Nazis at bay among other refugees in occupied Paris

My Girl Tisa (1948, Elliot Nugent) An immigrant (Lilli Palmer) works in a sweatshop, loves a budding lawyer (Sam Wanamaker) and tries to bring her father to New York.



1896-1920s

The Italian (1915, Reginald Barker), Italian gondolier comes to the US to make his fortune, works as shoeshiner, lives in Lower East Side, suffers tragedy.

The Immigrant (1917, Charlie Chaplin, 24 mins) Chaplin as The Tramp falls in love and is accused of theft on the boat to the US.

Hungry Hearts (1922, E. Mason Hopper), Jewish immigrants in NY fall in love, defend each other from injustice, and move to the suburbs.



19th century **20th Century** African American History american history Asia Asia & Middle East book review Brazil
British Empire China Civil War Cold War Colonialism communism cultural history digital history Early Modern Europe
Europe film gender history History of Science immigration India Islam Latin America Latin American History
Mexico Not Even Past Public History race religion Russia Slavery Texas Texas History Texas History Day
Transnational Twentieth Century History United States US History USSR Womens History world history
World War II

NOT EVEN PAST is produced by
The Department of History
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
We are supported by the College of Liberal Arts
And our **READERS**

DONATE

CONTACT

All content © 2010-present NOT EVEN PAST and the authors, unless otherwise noted

Sign up to receive the monthly Not Even Past newsletter

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE

FEATURES

BOOKS

TEACHING

DIGITAL & FILM

BLOG

IHS & PUBLIC HISTORY

TEXAS

ABOUT

